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ABSTRACT

A scale, summary sheet, and checklist provide a guide for selecting elementary social studies materials. The checklist is based on trends in social studies as found in professional literature and published social studies materials. It is appropriate for use by individual teachers, curriculum committees, or curriculum coordinators. Aimed at being a second step in the curriculum decision-making process, the important decisions of setting goals and objectives are first established by a local curriculum committee. Instructions for the checklist are followed by a scale for approximating the reviewer's perceptions of materials as related to the specific checklist items. The checklist contains sections on items concerning an overview of materials, text, or series, and the conceptual structure of the materials; items relating to areas of cultural equality and implicit biases and to self-development and values; items concerning format, modes of instruction and evaluation; and a statement of reviewer's general impressions. Sources used in the construction of the checklist are included. (Author/KSM)

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A CHECKLIST FOR SELECTING ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES MATERIALS

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INTRODUCTION

The following checklist was developed to provide a guide for selecting elementary social studies materials. It includes items which require consideration of most important ideas in contemporary social studies. It is based on the new trends in the field found in professional literature and published social studies classroom materials. Individual teachers, curriculum committees, or curriculum coordinators may find this checklist useful. If it is used by a committee, the findings should be systematically collected so that their results can be used in comparing and selecting appropriate materials. We have avoided using the term "textbook series" in order that curriculum committees remain free to draw on a variety of materials in addition to basal series.

Basic curriculum decisions should not be made outside the structure of schools or districts, and we don't propose to do so. We encourage maximum involvement involvement of teachers in curriculum organization and materials selection. Committees including teachers from all levels should be organized. The structure and sequence of the social studies curriculum should be established by this group. Community involvement is also desirable, but may not be practical in all cases. General goals and realistic, practical objectives for teaching and learning should also be established before consideration of materials for selection. These <u>important decisions</u> rest in the hands of the <u>local curriculum committee.</u>

The checklist presented here is intended to be a <u>second step</u>. It should be used after the establishment of general goals and objectives for the overall social studies program. It is designed as a guide for materials selection only. The concept of a checklist is presented here in an effort to aid a systematic appraisal of material. Careful examination of materials is the aim, so users should view this as a flexible model. Users should feel free to adapt it in the ways which are most appropriate to their situation. Overall, the approach taken in the checklist is that of the

"professional rule of thumb." In the busy world of the school, there is little time to establish and carry on lengthy and intricate analyses. We feel that the judgement of the professional in the field is reliable and most worthy in materials selection. Hopefully, this checklist will be used by teachers in the field who will be using the materials. Please note that this checklist is a model and that individuals or committees may wish to change it by adding or deleting items in accordance with their specific objectives.

HOW TO USE THE CHECKLIST

First, all items in the checklist should be read and changes, i.e., additions and deletions, deemed necessary by individuals or committees, be made. Next, if a committee is working on materials selection, all members should be in agreement as to definition of terms. This will increase the reliability of the individual ratings. This should not be a lengthy process. Any item that presents any great difficulty should be reworded or deleted. The depth of the review will vary due to time and number of materials to be reviewed by an individual. Judgements will be made on the basis of the reviewer's professional background. There are no absolute right answers to the questions raised in the checklist, so the reviewer should not hesitate to express an opinion. It is preferable that several reviewers examine the same material so that any one individual's perceptions are balanced by the judgements of others. However, this may not be possible in all cases and individual teachers may assess and report on a single piece of material.

THE SCALE

Use the following numbers to approximate the reviewer's perceptions of materials as related to the specific items below. The reviewer should be asking questions: To what extent do these materials, i.e., textbooks and assorted supporting materials, meet the criteria as stated in each item? A number is then written in the space provided to indicate the reviewer's evaluation.

3/ To a great extent

2/ To some extent

1/ Minimally

0/ Not at all

NA/ Not applicable

NOTE: Use "0" if the materials should, but do not, meet the criteria

Use "NA" when criteria do not apply

The summation of all numbers applied to each item can be assumed to give a rough overall rating, however subsection totals also may be useful. Committees may elect to delete entire sections or give more numerical weight to particular sections or items, within a section. A committee may wish to rank-order items within each section of the checklist and use only those deemed important. This procedure will shorten the time required for reviews. All these decisions are up to the committee. Committees should feel completely free to change any part of this instrument in any way they choose. Again, a word of caution: the entire procedure is a "rule of thumb" approach and materials should not be selected on the basis of numerical totals alone. Second and third reviews of those materials scoring highest will be necessary for final selection. The checklist may be applied to individual books or to entire series. However, comparisons between types of materials should be consistent. Single books should not be compared to entire series.

The final section (Section VIII), will ask for a non-quantitative, open-ended statement of the reviewer's general impression. If desired, a numerical value may be assigned to Section VIII, so as to make the "general impression" section compatable quantitatively with the other sections. Thirty points total is recommended

if numbers are used.

NOTE: Many considerations in program development and materials selection are left untouched by this checklist. Faculty backgrounds and attitudes, student skills levels, space and equipment, budget limitations and class size are just a few areas of additional concern. We recognize the importance of these considerations, but chose not to lengthen the checklist by including items on them. However, we hope that this checklist will aid in effective and, to some extent, systematic selection of exciting and functional social studies material.

Summary Sheet
Checklist for the Selection of
Elementary Social Studies Materials

Title(s) of material reviewed:
(If a series is being evaluated, include the series title and all titles of major books at each grade level.)

Intended grade level:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Briefly describe material:

_____

_____

Publisher: _____

Author(s) (optional) _____

Publication date: _____ Cost (if available): _____

Rating scores:

Section I _____

Section II _____

Section III _____

Section IV _____

Section V _____

Section VI _____

Section VII _____

TOTAL: _____

General remarks and recommendations:

Section I - ITEMS CONCERNING AN OVERVIEW OF THE MATERIALS, TEXT OR SERIES

____ Does the content of the material meet the requirements of the sequence developed by the social studies committee?

___ Are the general objectives of the programs stated clearly?

____ Are these goals compatable with the general goals established by your committee?

____ Are the more specific learning objectives compatable with the learning objectives developed by the committee?

____ Do the specific objectives relate to and lead to the attainment of the stated general objectives?

____ Is there a balance between overall continuity and flexibility within levels and units?

____ Do materials provide for skills development?

____ Are the skills compatable with the skills goals developed by your committee?

Optional items on the overview of materials developed by the curriculum committee or the reviewers.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION I

Section II - ITEMS CONCERNING THE CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE OF THE MATERIALS

____ Are the materials designed to develop concepts as opposed to teaching isolated facts?

____ Are the materials inquiry-based? (Asking instead of telling)

____ Is there concern for the development of reflective thinking or a system of inquiry, such as the scientific method? (This may be informal and implicit)

____ Are lessons designed to help children form concepts?

____ Are children asked to gather and analyze data?

____ Are children asked to suggest solutions based on their findings? (Hypothesize)

____ Are children asked to form reasonable and defensible generalizations, based on their inquiries?

____ Are materials intellectually honest?

____ Do the materials present a realistic view of the world?

____ Do the materials draw on social science disciplines in addition to history and geography?

Optional items on the conceptual structure of materials, developed by the curriculum committee or the reviewer.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION II

Section III - ITEMS RELATING TO AREAS OF CULTURAL EQUALITY AND IMPLICIT BIASES

____ Do materials present other cultures in a positive and interesting fashion?

____ Are materials free from implicit racism, i.e., are members of several groups within the human species presented in reasonable proportion? (Both in print and in illustrations)

____ Do materials present a view of the diversity which exists within all cultures and ethnic groups?

____ Are values of other cultures presented and examined fairly?

____ Are male and female roles presented fairly without traditional overemphasis on male activities?

____ Are materials free of sex-role stereotypes?

____ Are economic systems of other nations presented fairly?

____ Are political systems of other nations presented fairly?

____ Do materials present a view of what it means to live in a world community?

____ Do materials foster a commitment to a world of peace?

____ Do the materials encourage an attitude of racial and social equality?

Optional items on biases in material, developed by the curriculum committee or the reviewer.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION III

Section IV - ITEMS RELATING TO SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND VALUES

____ Are the materials concerned with the development of children's self-image?

____ Are children asked to examine their own values?

____ Are children encouraged and aided in developing consistant value systems?

____ Are children exposed to diverse values of other cultures?

____ Are materials relevant to the lives of the children?

____ Are materials interesting and exciting to children?

____ Are children asked to resolve value conflicts of relevance to them?

____ Do the materials have a system or process of value inquiry?

Optional items on self-development and values, developed by the curriculum committee or the reviewer.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION IV

Section V - ITEMS CONCERNING FORMAT

____ Is the overall content and format potentially appealing to children?

____ Is the overall content and format potentially appealing to teachers?

____ Is the reading level reasonably suited to the skills level for which it is written?

____ Is the reading interesting?

____ Are the illustrations and photography clear, of good quality and interesting?

____ Are the illustrations and photography functionally part of the lessons rather than just incidental?

____ Are the materials multimedia? Do they include:
(check items if included)

____ films
____ filmstrips
____ records
____ booklets (as opposed to single texts)
____ simulation games
____ posters

____ Are maps and charts functional and understandable?

Optional items on format, developed by the curriculum committee or reviewer.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION V

Section VI - ITEMS ON MODES OF INSTRUCTION

____ Do materials include functional teachers' manuals which provide a usable guide for instruction of each lesson?

____ Are class discussions an integral part of the program?

____ Are provisions made for small group instruction, discussion and activities?

____ Are lessons provided in which individual activities are encouraged?

____ Do questions asked in the materials require reasoning at levels beyond recall?

____ Are there questions involving values?

____ Are teachers provided with a variety of activities to use with the children? i.e. games, art, activities, etc.

____ Are writing assignments interesting and challenging?

____ Are students involved actively in a variety of lessons?

____ Do the materials offer classes the opportunity to be involved in their community?

____ Does the program allow for student-initiated learning?

Optional items on modes of instruction, developed by the curriculum committee or the reviewer.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION VI

Section VII - EVALUATION

____ Do the materials provide for evaluation of learning which is compatable with the goals of evaluation of your committee?

____ Are a variety of evaluations and activities suggested, such as:

(check items if included)

____ self-evaluation forms

____ paper-pencil tests

____ checklists

____ journals

____ Do the evaluation instruments attempt to measure the objectives of the program?

Optional items on evaluation developed by the curriculum committee or the reviewer.

____

____

____

____ SUBTOTAL FOR SECTION VII

Section VIII - STATEMENT OF REVIEWER'S GENERAL IMPRESSION

This may be rewritten in abreviated form on the summary sheet.

____ Optional score up to 30 points

SOURCES USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION
OF THIS CHECKLIST

Elementary children in social studies classrooms.

Elementary social studies teachers.

Collegues and friends of the Social Studies Service Center.

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